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Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 18071 01 OF 02 011127Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
----------031478 011135Z /14
O 011115Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2111

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 18071

NODIS

STADIS//////////////////////////////////////

CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

U.S. DEL. NO. 32

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.)
SUBJECT: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

REF: CAIRO 18056 (U.S. DEL. NO. 28)

1. HAVING SLEPT OVERNIGHT ON OUR "WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE" MESSAGE OF YESTERDAY (REFTEL), I HAVE HAD SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO ADD.

2. I STILL COME DOWN IN FAVOR OF THE COURSE OF ACTION RECOMMENDED IN REFTEL, BUT ON REFLECTION DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE TIMETABLE WE SET FORTH IS REALISTIC FOR SURFACING A WRITTEN PROOS. FOR ONE THING, WE CLEARLY NEED MORE TIME THAN IS AVAILABLE BETWEEN NOW AND SATURDAY TO MAKE A CREDIBLE CASE THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES, WHICH HAVE ALREALLY BEEN GOING ON

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SPORADICALLY FROM THE ISMAILIA MEETING IN DECEMBER THROUGH THE LEEDS CASTLE TALKS, HAVE REACHED AN IMPASSE JUSTIFYING AN ATTEMPT BY US TO BREAK IT. FOR ANOTHER THING, WE NEED MORE TIME TO DEMONSTRATE THAT GENUINE AND THOROUGH CONSULTATIONS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY US WITH BOTH PARTIES. MY TALKS IN JERUSALEM AND HERE CAN, IN MY VIEW, BE HONESTLY PORTRAYED AS THE BEGINNING OF

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CONSULTATIONS ABOUT OUR IDEAS. YOUR FORTHCOMING TRIP SHOULD, IN MY VIEW, BEEN SEEN AS CONTINUING THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATIONS AT A HIGHER LEVEL BY OUTLINING OUR IDEAS IN GREATER DETAIL AND WITH GREATER PRECISION, BUT SHOULD STOP SHORT OF LEAVING ANYTHING THAT WOULD BE SEEN AS A FORMAL, FINAL WRITTEN U.S. PROPOSAL.

3. ANOTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS THAT, IF YOU PROCEEDED ON THE TIMETABLE SET FORTH IN REFTEL, THIS WOULD MEAN THAT YOU WOULD BE COMING OUT HERE TO DO AT ONCE, IN THE ABSENCE OF FURTHER DIRECT TALKS, WHAT WE HAVE TOLD THE EGYPTIANS, SAUDIS AND JORDANIANS WE NEEDED ANOTHER ROUND OF DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS TO DO. THIS WOULD UNDERCUT WITH THE ARABS THE CREDIBILITY OF OUR ARGUMENTS FOR DIRECT TALKS, EXPOSE US TO THE CHARGE THAT WE WERE BEING PANICKED BY ARAB PRESSURES, AND MAKE IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT (IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE) TO WIN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE POLICY OBJECTIVES, AND COURSE OF ACTION TO ACHIEVE THEM, RECOMMENDED IN REFTEL.

4. TO SUMMARIZE, I STILL BELIEVE WE NEED TO DECIDE BEFORE YOU COME WHAT OUR COURSE OF ACTION WILL BE OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, INCLUDING QUITE PRECISELY THE ELEMENTS OF A U.S. POSITION WHICH WE WOULD PUT FORTH AS A FAIR AND REASONABLE FRAMEWORK FOR A FIRST

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PHASE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT, ON THE BASIS OF WHICH JORDAN COULD JOIN THE NEGOTIATIONS LOOKING TOWARD AGREEMENT ON A TRANSITIONAL REGIME FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA AND, IN THE NEXT PHASE, TOWARD AN ULTIMATE FINAL SETTLEMENT. AS I SEE IT, YOU WOULD DISCUSS THE ELEMENTS OF OUR IDEAS ORALLY BUT SPECIFICALLY IN JERUSALEM AND ALEXANDRIA DURING THIS TRIP, ALLOW TIME (PERHAPS TILL THE END OF RAMADAN) FOR THE PARTIES TO REFLECT AND HAVE FURTHER CONSULTATIONS WITH US THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, DURING WHICH PERIOD WE WOULD ENGAGE IN A SYSTEMATIC INFORMATION EFFORT WITH KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION GENERALLY, PERHAPS INCLUDING A PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH. I WOULD THEN SEE YOUR RETURNING TO THE AREA IN EARLY SEPTEMBER WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF FORMALLY TABLING OUR POSITION.

5. IF WE CAN GET FROM SADAT DURING THIS TRIP A PRIVATE COMMITMENT TO LATER TALKS, SO MUCH THE BETTER. THIS IS PROBLEMATICAL AT BEST, HOWEVER, AND I DO NOT THINK WE SHOULD LOCK OURSELVES INTO MAKING THIS A SINE QUA NON FOR FURTHER ACTION ON OUR PART. I HAVE NO

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DOUBT THAT SADAT WILL AGREE TO FURTHER TALKS ONCE WE
HAVE FORMALLY PUT FORTH A U.S. POSITION WHICH MINIMALLY
MEETS HIS POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS, THOUGH THERE IS
ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD BALK
AT THAT POINT, PARTICULARLY IF SADAT INSISTED THAT
THEY ACCEPT IN ADVANCE THE U.S. POSITION AS THE BASIS
FOR FURTHER TALKS. WE WOULD NEED TO MAKE CLEAR
THAT WE WOULD NOT SUPPORT SUCH AN INSISTENCE ON

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ACTION NODS-00

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FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

HIS PART, BUT EQUALLY WE WOULD NEED TO ASSURE HIM THAT
WE WOULD NOT BACK OFF OUR PROPOSAL. IN OTHER WORDS,
WE WOULD HAVE TO ASSURE HIM THAT IF HE AGREED TO GO
INTO TALKS HE WOULD NOT BE CONFRONTED WITH NEGOTIATIONS
TO "COMPROMISE ON OUR COMPROMISE."

6. THIS STRETCHED-OUT TIMETABLE CLEARLY HAS A NUMBER
OF RISKS. ONE RISK IS THAT THE PRESSURES ON SADAT
TO REJOIN THE ARAB FOLD WILL GROW DURING THE INTER-
VENING PERIOD TO THE POINT WHERE HIS POSITION
WILL FURTHER HARDEN AND CROSS THE THRESHOLD OF WHAT
WE COULD SUPPORT AS THE ELEMENTS OF A FIRST PHASE
EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT. ANOTHER RISK IS THAT,
ONCE THE ISRAELIS HAD HEARD THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR
IDEAS DURING YOUR FORTHCOMING TRIP, THEY WOULD HAVE
SEVERAL WEEKS DURING WHICH TO MOUNT A MAJOR EFFORT

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TO DISCREDIT THEM. THESE ARE SERIOUS RISKS, BUT
I HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE DISADVANTAGES OF DOING
EVERYTHINGIN ONE BIT, WHICH ARE SET FORTH IN
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PARAS 2 AND 3 ABOVE, ARE BOTH GREATER AND MORE
IMMEDIATE. EILTS

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Draft Date: 01 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
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